4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

628 562 578 worthy of a better cause, and fourteen victims fell, thus perpetuating the feud among the survivors.

On another occasion the breaking of a girl's pitcher at the fountain by two mischievous boys resulted in such a desperate contest between her friends and theirs that some sixty persons fell in the fight. It is said, however, that even on such occasions as these 562 577 484 the men refrain, as far as possible, from striking or wounding the women, for the Albanian code of honour makes it impossible to attack a woman, whether armed or unarmed. The sacredness attached to their persons extends also to those whom they take under their protection. Escorted by a girl only, travellers may safely pass through the wildest parts of the country, and a man may cross, without fear, the lands of one with whom he is at feud, if he have the safe-conduct of a woman belonging to his enemy's family.

577 563 522 To such an extent is respect for women carried by the Albanians, that it is contrary to their notions of propriety ever to make women the subject of jokes or humorous stories. Insult or annoyance offered to a 578 562 girl, or carrying off one without the consent of her parents, almost invariably results in bitter feuds between families, or fierce battles between tribes. As with most mountain people, the moral code is with 684 the Skipetars exceedingly strict. Among many of the tribes any lapse from virtue on the part of a woman is punished with death, a subsequent marriage not being allowed to condone the fault. The penalty of adultery is of equally Draconic severity. The unfaithful wife is placed up to her shoulders in a pit, and

6: Lane T-3 (no date) 1923 EGl Albania EGl

by armful and carried into the houses to be fed to the sheep and goats.

The sky was still a leaden gray, with darker clouds moving sluggishly among the mountains, and the air still seemed more than half full of falling water. The soaked rawhide opangi were like soft rags on my feet; at every step my woolen stockings emptied and filled with water like sponges, and all our fingers were shrunk in ridges from the long wetting. But we were gay, we sang along the way, the weak little songs that so amused the steel-lunged mountaineers, and when a low growl of thunder and a flicker of fire among the clouds announced a stronger onslaught of the rain, Perolli waved his hand toward the mountain tops and joyously shouted something—we thought, to the effect that we were not flowers.

"*Dranit?*" said I. "Great Scott! do you need announce that we aren't flowers? Shout that we are not drowned puppies, if you want to startle onlookers."

"Not *dranit—drangojt,*" Perolli corrected. "I said to the dragon he may growl as he likes; we're not drangojt."

"No," I said. "No, we aren't. But what aren't we?"

"Drangojt," replied Perolli, and broke into careless song. There were times when I could have boxed that young man's ears, for nothing is more irritating than a sense of humor which is not yours. And the Albanians have a sense

of humor which is never idle, and seldom comprehensible to the foreigner.

"Drangojt means the people with wings, Mrs. Lane," said Rexh, and thought that all was clear. "You know, the people born with little wings under their arms," he elaborated, when I regarded him blankly. "The people—I don't know how other to say it, Mrs. Lane. Wings, you know—what the birds fly with—wings. Under their arms. Don't you have people born with wings in your country?"

I said that if we had I knew nothing of it, and Rexh's forehead wrinkled with perplexity. "But perhaps—— Of course you are not a drangue, you would not know the American drangojt," he concluded, his face clearing. "You can usually tell them, though, by their running to their houses whenever it rains. First, you hear the dragon on the mountains; then, you see all the drangojt running to houses. That is the way you tell them; except, if you are their mother, then you see the wings when they are born. But if you are not their mother, you cannot see the wings, and you only know they are drangojt when they run to their houses in the rain."

"Are they afraid they'll get their wings wet?" said I, with great interest.

"Oh no! They are not afraid of anything. When the weather is thundering, that is the dragon fighting with the drangojt. So when they hear the dragon, all the drangojt go quickly to their houses to be ready if they are called to

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

bread. Five commercial lorries were drawn up beside them, 669* but the leading one had blown up on a land-mine and its front wheels and radiator were shattered and twisted. Abas Kupi came to meet us and embraced us warmly, expressing his relief to see us safe and sound. Half a mile away, from the head of the pass, came the sound of rifle and machine-gun fire.

The Zogist counter-offensive had begun that morning: and the Agha now explained to us that he intended to re-occupy the Shupal valley and descend over the Qaf Murresit into Mati to outflank the Partisans. He parried most of my questions and presently we left the road to climb with the guerillas to the head of the Shupal valley. There we found Murad Basha and Dule Allemani with an advance guard of some five hundred men, grouped just below the crest of the watershed. From the crest itself a few snipers were harassing the retreat of the Partisans. The latter soon withdrew out of range; and an hour later, with forces which amounted to fifteen hundred men, Abas Kupi reoccupied the village of Bruz. There we were lodged for the night, in the same house where I had first met Petrit three months before.

The morale of the Zogists was high; and their chiefs had been much encouraged by a speech in the Albanian transmission of the B.B.C. made by General Percy, the former Inspector-General of the Albanian gendarmerie. The General had condemned the Partisan attack against Abas Kupi, and his words, taken in conjunction with the Smith Mission, had convinced the Zogist leaders that they could count on British support. The talk that evening was livelier than usual, and 522 Murad Basha indulged in sallies against the reactionary influence of the *Beys* and *Aghas* with pointed references to Abas Kupi and Said. They riposted with a joke typical of Albanian humour and which was kept up for several weeks. Among the chiefs was a kindly but simple young man whose brother had been killed some years before when a bomb with which he had gone out fishing had exploded in his hand. The bomb had apparently been given him by Murad Basha; and Abas Kupi now represented to the young man with the utmost gravity that he was in honour bound to avenge the injury. The

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

522 youth at first took it all in earnest; Basha looked hotly embarrassed; and the assembled company laughed till their sides ached. Later in the evening a more pathetic note was struck by Dule Bey, when I condoled with him over the burning of his home.

"I had no right," he said, "to expect that my house would escape destruction when so many great cities all over the world are bombed every day. But I had hoped that it would be burnt by the Germans whom I intended to attack and not by fellow Albanians."

669 From Bruz I had sent couriers to Maclean, who joined us next afternoon with Davis and the wireless set. He made the journey without difficulty; for the Partisans were in full retreat and their rearguards had already lost touch with the Zogist van. We slept that night in Mener, a village two hours' march further down the valley, and in the morning received a disturbing report from Smiley that German troops had appeared on the Mati front near Burrel. We at once informed Abas Kupi and told him bluntly that any "collaboration" between his men and the Germans must prove fatal to our relations. He showed concern rather than surprise at the news, and, after some discussion, wrote to Sul Kurti, ordering him to avoid all contact with the Germans and to withdraw his men from any sector where they might appear.

The Agha now marched off to direct the reoccupation of Shupal, but we remained at Mener, preparing a report for Headquarters. Smiley joined us there next day, the 19th July, after finding it impossible to cross the Mati valley. That same afternoon a courier came from Tirana with the news that Fikri Dine had accepted the premiership and had persuaded a number of influential men hitherto unsuspected of "collaboration" to join his government.

The presence of lorries with the Zogist forces, the sudden abundance of white bread, the arrival of German troops in Mati, and now the news that Fikri Dine had taken office, all suggested that Neubacher had at last succeeded in creating the very anti-Communist Front which we had worked hard, and for a time successfully, to prevent. The situation of the Zogists

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

they met with public commendation in such cases. The modernity of the court-house was against the oath; there had been no time for the growth of stories about punishment for perjury in it. For the same reason the new church in Nikaj was not thought so good a place for taking an oath as was the old one.

It happened inevitably that some men were sceptical or sacrilegious enough to take a false oath and plausible enough to persuade the requisite number of compurgators to swear to their innocence. A thief could send a stolen cow to graze with his own, yoke the stolen ox into the plough with one of his own and hang a bell on the neck of the stolen sheep or goat. The real owner might recognize the animal, but he could not claim it. The public too might recognize it, but they had to shut their eyes. The law said, 'what is won by an oath belongs to him who wins it'. The law disliked this principle but had to accept it because there was no way of bringing home a crime to a man who had been cleared by an oath. This legal defect made it essential that honourable and knowledgeable compurgators should be chosen. The same defect made every tribal authority, in the interests of justice, foster the general fear of perjury to the utmost.

In spite of the fear of punishment for perjury, some jesting stories, which are possibly apocryphal, were told of perjurers. Once there was a headman in the village of Peladhi, near Zerqan, who wrapped up a block of wood in a cloth as if it were a Koran and summoned the village to swear on it that they would no longer go and cut wood illicitly in each other's forest. They took the oath and, believing they had done so on the Koran, kept it. He too took the oath, but knowing it to be void because taken only on a profane bit of wood went afterwards to his neighbour's forest and cut all the wood he wanted.

619 634 114 Travel in Ghegnia in the years 1908–13 would not have been easy, even for an experienced man. For a woman to have made these journeys is something of a miracle. Others may be the result of the process of amalgamation, for many of the "tribes" which she mentions were miserable fragments of former populations decimated by warfare, and massacred, in some cases, by the Serbs. By 1929 a considerable realignment must have taken place in the whole area north of the Drin, and especially in the regions which she designates as Postripa and Pulati. In any case the 10 groups of people whom I have designated as tribes were so considered by the people with whom I worked in 1929, and form more or less self-contained, intermarrying units, sufficient for our present purpose.

619 628 Under the tribal system warfare was almost continuous. The underlying cause was of course population pressure. The overt causes were seduction, theft of women, elopement, cattle-stealing, and general raiding. It did not take much to give offense, particularly in the late winter, when food was scarce. Even a man who had almost enough to eat himself would be under severe tension, because of the general nervous strain of his kinsmen and dependents, and consequent maladjustment within the household.

●522 A chance blow, a harsh word, even a play on words which is very easy in Shqip, or above all a cruel joke—these seemingly minor conflicts often led to gunplay and murder, with consequent feuding. I had several occasions to feel their Iron Age wit, so much like that of the Norse sagas. Once my host in Zadrima remarked, in front of many people, that I had the skinniest legs he had ever seen, and wondered how I could walk. The assembled company burst into Homeric roars. On another occasion, in a Puka *han*, I lifted my head suddenly and hit it a sound smack on a protruding nail, partially stunning myself in the process. This was the funniest thing in the world. Once again, when Farnsworth and I crawled into our sleeping bags for the night, the whole household laughed and laughed. When we asked what was the matter, they said, "Just think, if the house should catch on fire! You

8:Coon E-5 (1929-30:46-48)1950 EG1 Albania EG1
Highland Ghegs

wouldn't be able to get out of those sacks, Ha! Ha! Ha!"

What happens when a man kills another of the same tribe can best be learned from the following quotation from Miss Durham.[7]

> Murder may be the result of a quarrel or it may be a blood-feud, the cause of which is more or less remote. In either case the man who has taken blood flies at once to a safe place outside the tribe. [Miss Durham is using "tribe" in the restricted sense, as before.] Any house is bound to give him hospitality. In the case of a feud, he is regarded as a most unfortunate man who has but done his duty. He at once proclaims his deed. The headmen of his tribe then meet and order his house to be burnt. Among the Dukagini the council has power also to destroy his crops, cut down his fruit trees, slaughter his beasts, and condemn the land to lie unworked for a term of years. An incredible amount of food-stuff is thus wasted. In this group not only the man who has taken blood, but all the males of his "house," are liable for blood, so they, too, have to fly. The "house" is the home maybe of a whole family community—forty people. But the law is carried out to the last letter. Such desolated spots have I seen. But "It is the Canon, so must be obeyed," was the answer to any remonstrance I made. The women and children may scatter and find shelter in other houses if they can; they usually do. A man can save his house if he can return to it and defend it three days successfully, so that the men sent by the council cannot set fire to it; I saw "a very brave man" in Berisha who had three times saved his house thus. Or a man can save his house by inviting the head of another mehala [household] to act as house lord and defend it with his own men. This might cause severe fighting. The council, to prevent this, then as a rule agrees to burn the house only and spare the property. The amount of property to be destroyed was always decided by the council. . . . In addition to the burning of the house, in all tribes a fine has to be paid. . . . in sheep or cattle. . . . to the Turkish Government. In the case of Maltsia e Madhe this was paid . . . in Scutari. . . . punctually . . . . The Turkish Government had a certain hold on all the nearer tribes, for it could hold as hostage any member of a tribe which owed blood-gelt and came to market at Scutari. The outlying tribes of Dukagini by no means always either notified or paid for their murders.
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> Feuds being very weakening to a tribe, the headmen of the tribe or friends of the family would attempt to stop the feud. Blood-feuds of the Dukagini

[7] Durham, 1928, pp. 66-68.

[8] Miss Durham translated *bairaktar as* "head of the tribe." This explains her confusion between tribes and *bairaks* noted earlier.